

PRINCIPLES OF INFORMATION

It is the policy of the Department of Defense to make available timely and accurate information so that the public, Congress and the news media may assess and understand the facts about national security and defense strategy.

Requests for information from organizations and private citizens will be answered in a timely manner. In carrying out the policy, the following principles of information will apply:

- *Information will be made fully and readily available, consistent with statutory requirements, unless its release is precluded by current and valid security classification. The provisions of the Freedom of Information Act will be supported in both letter and spirit.*
- *A free flow of general and military information will be made available, without censorship or propaganda, to the men and women of the Armed Forces and their dependents.*
- *Information will not be classified or otherwise withheld to protect the government from criticism or embarrassment.*
- *Information will be withheld only when disclosure would adversely affect national security or threaten the safety or privacy of the men and women of the Armed Forces.*
- *The Department's obligation to provide the public with information on its major programs may require detailed public affairs planning and coordination within the Department and with other government agencies. The sole purpose of such activity is to expedite the flow of information to the public: propaganda has no place in Department of Defense public affairs programs.*

**The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs
has the primary responsibility for carrying out this commitment.**

1 April 1997
Date



William S. Cohen
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Secretary of Defense